DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 090 CG 020 173

AUTHOR Jaret, Kathe
TITLE Stress Intervention Using Cognitive Principles.
PUB DATE Mar 87
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists (19th, New Orleans, LA, March 4-8, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Children; *Cognitive Restructuring; *Coping; *Counseling Techniques; *Group Counseling; Skill Development; Stress Management; *Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

This document describes "Coping with Stress: A Cognitive Intervention Program for Children," a six-session program that was designed to expand children's awareness of how their thoughts and feelings affect the process of coping with stress. The first three sessions concentrate on skill building; the last three sessions allow participants to apply the skills they have learned. The first session introduces the concept of stress, the second session focuses on the concept of cognitive appraisal, and the third session concentrates on the concept of coping and coping options. During the fourth session, participants fill out coping checklists for a problem situation and discuss their responses. Strategies and alternatives for the stressful situation introduced in session four are developed in the fifth session. The sixth and final session gives members an opportunity to report their progress in using the strategies of session five. Cartoons, visual imagery, role playing, stories, and discussions are used to teach the concepts. A group setting is used, and the program can be adapted for use with children of different ages. This program was designed to serve as a model to expand the role of school psychologists, counselors, and mental health workers who provide services to children. (Author/NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 286090

Stress Intervention Using Cognitive Principles

Kathe Jaret
RFD 1 James Trail, Box 382
W. Kingston, R.I. 02892

CG 020173

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Kathe A. Jaret
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

"Coping with Stress: A Cognitive Intervention Program for Children" is a six session program that was designed to expand childrens' awareness of how their thoughts and feelings affect the process of coping with stress. The first three sessions concentrate on skill building and the remaining ones allow participants to apply the skills they have learned. Cartoons, visual imagery, role playing, stories and discussions are used to teach the concepts. A group setting is used and the program can be adapted for use with children of different ages. Specific intervention programs can be designed to meet individual needs. It is hoped that children will develop a better understanding of the process of coping with stress after exposure to the program. This program was designed to serve as a model to expand the role of school psychologists, counselors, and mental health workers who provide services to children. This paper describes the theoretical rationale which underlies the program and provides a description of what is contained in each session.

Kathe Jarret

Stress Intervention Using Cognitive Principles

The program "Coping with Stress: A Cognitive Intervention Program for Children" was built on the cognitive theory of stress developed by Lazarus and his colleagues (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). According to this theory, stress is a "relationship between a person and an environment that is appraised as relevant to personal well being and in which one's resources are taxed or exceeded" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19). Stress implies that there is a disturbed person-environment relationship. As an individual faces a problem and interacts with others, changes in emotion and coping occur. Thus, coping with stress is a process that is characterized by change and is influenced by emotions and thoughts.

The first session introduces the concept of stress. By showing pictures of children in stressful situations (e.g. going to the doctor, taking a test, going on a date, moving to a new home), the participants learn about the variety of situations that can be stressful. The group is asked to discuss what the characters may be thinking and feeling. The goals of this session are to: a) teach children about the situational factors that generate stress, b) point out that everyone has stress, c) demonstrate that stress happens in both good and bad situations and d) that what they think, feel and do can create different levels of stress. For example, a discussion about moving to a new home is used to demonstrate that entering a new situation and not knowing what to expect can induce stress.

The second session introduces the concept of cognitive appraisal. This refers to the process of judging whether a situation is stressful and whether one has the resources to deal with it. Guided fantasies were designed to demonstrate how

cognitive appraisal operates. For example, the group is asked to fantasize about trying out for a school team. After this, they are asked to fantasize about calling a radio station to win a pair of tickets to the movies. By discussing how they felt, what they thought, how important it was to be successful and how their self esteem was affected in each situation, the group learns that more important situations have more emotional impact. Cartoons with two different endings are then used to demonstrate that what each character thought and felt affected how the situation ended. A diagram is used to demonstrate that we react to our interpretations of events rather than to the events themselves and that our thoughts, feelings and coping skills affect the outcome of the event as well as how stressed we feel.

The third session introduces the concept of coping and is designed to expand awareness of coping options. Coping refers to all behaviors and emotions that are used rather than only successful efforts. Emphasis is placed upon the fact that coping is related to thoughts and emotions. Cartoons and stories with two endings are used to demonstrate a variety of coping mechanisms. For example, Lance's parents told him that they were going to get a divorce. In some ways, Lance felt that this was his fault. He was too afraid and embarrassed to talk about his feelings and began to have trouble concentrating in school. When both parents asked him to celebrate his birthday with them, he did not know what to do and went to his room to sulk. Jake, on the other hand, talked about his feelings when his parents told him that they were going to get a divorce. His teacher and best friend understood how he felt. When both parents asked him out for his birthday, he discussed the problem with them, and a compromise was reached. At the end of the session, each individual receives a coping checklist which will be used to check off the characteristics of a situation as well as one's thoughts, emotions and coping choices.

During the fourth session, each individual fills out the coping checklist for a problem situation. The group members are asked to share their responses. Role playing and drawings can be used to act out the situations. During the fifth session, strategies and alternatives are developed for the stressful situation discussed during the previous week. Concentration is placed on the thoughts and feelings that each individual experiences in the situation. Visual imagery and role playing are used to help individuals prepare for and confront stressful situations. During the week, the group members practice using the plan they have developed and report their progress during the sixth session. Additional sessions can be scheduled to continue to help individuals develop strategies, practice them and report on their progress.

References

Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R.S. (1980). An analysis of coping in a middle aged community sample. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 21,* 219-239.

Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R.S. (1985). If it changes it must be a process: study of emotion and coping during three stages of a college examination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48,* 150-170.

Lazarus, R.S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping.* New York: Springer Publishing.

Lazarus, R.S., & Launier, R. (1978). Stress-related transactions between person and environment. In L.A. Pervin & M. Lewis (Eds.), *Perspectives in interactional psychology.* (pp. 287-327). New York: Plenum.